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FLASHBACK

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Cover: An old log house used as a Cane Hill College dormitory. This building was used as a hospital by Gen. James G. Blunt's Union Forces during the Civil War.
(Photograph courtesy: Walter John Lemke Papers (MS L541), S4, B5, F32, No. 1297)

The Life and Legacy of Fontaine Richard Earle

Jenny Vego*

Local historical information does not mention many men who have done as much for their communities as Fontaine Richard Earle. From his arrival in Northwest Arkansas in 1859 to his death here in 1908, Earle left a lasting legacy on the canvas of history that should never be forgotten. Earle wore many hats and had many responsibilities, but it seems that he handled all of them with the charm and grace of a Southern gentleman. He put God first in all that he did, and no doubt was given direction because of his love for the Lord. Historian David Ellis states "he was easily the leading educator and evangelist of Northwest Arkansas throughout the end of the century."[1] The truth of this statement can only be determined by turning to historical evidence about Earle. Who was this man, and how did he come to be here in Northwest Arkansas? Was he actually the leading educator of the area, and if so, what made him that way? Why were his preaching and efforts of evangelism seen by so many to be effective? Earle served as President of two colleges during his lifetime, Cane Hill College and Cumberland College where he laid the foundation for education to flourish. He lived God's word every day and preached his message as pastor for the Salem Congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian church, as well as the occasional sermon for the Cane Hill congregation. During the Civil War Earle's leadership was apparent on the battlefield as Captain of Company B and Commander of the 34th Infantry but more importantly through the unofficial role as chaplain in the Army. By taking a look at Earle's sermons, letters, speeches, and the many articles and biographies that were written about him, the statement that Ellis makes above will prove to ring true- Fontaine Richard Earle was one of the most influential men in Northwest Arkansas during his lifetime.

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*The author was awarded second place in the 2009 W.J. Lemke Prize for this article. She currently lives in Tennessee.

Rev. Fount R. Earle, ca. 1870s
Courtesy: Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/
Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-1377)

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF FONTAINE RICHARD EARLE

Fontaine Richard Earle began his life in Pond River, Hopkins County, Kentucky on January 9, 1831. He was born to Samuel Baylis Earle and Jane Woodson Earle. As a young man, Earle attended small rural schools and at the age of thirteen, he left school and went to work in the fields. Earle moved to Greenville, Kentucky at the age of twenty and found a position as a clerk in a local store, which helped him to earn enough money so that he could go to seminary. To further maintain his living, he also taught at local schools.[2] Eventually, Earle enrolled at Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee in 1856. From here he received his Bachelor of Arts degree and his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1858, and became part of the first graduating class from the university.[3] Upon graduation, Earle also became an ordained minister for the Presbyterian Church and returned to Greenville, Kentucky to preach. He preached for a short time at Old Liberty Church in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, but shortly after graduating and attaining this position, he was offered the position as President of Cane Hill College in Boonsboro (Cane Hill), Arkansas. He gladly accepted, and assumed the role upon his move to the state in 1859. He also became pastor for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Cane Hill.[4] Upon his move to Cane Hill, Earle met Ms. Amanda Buchanan, daughter of a local minister named John Buchanan whose family was influential in local politics, religion, and education. It is said that she may have been teaching in the area of Cane Hill, or even at the college itself at the time of their first meeting. Wherever she may have been teaching, she met Earle and they became enamored with one another. [5]

Cane Hill was a growing little community nestled in the Ozarks when Earle arrived there. There were many springs in the region, wild game to be hunted, and prosperous soil to be farmed, so many flocked to the area.[6] Several prominent families had moved to the area from Crystal Hill, a community outside Little Rock, and as population increased the needs were seen to establish a church and a school. Most of these early settlers belonged to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, so a congregation was organized in 1828 that first met in a log cabin. Small country schools were also established. Six years later, in 1834, men from the local Presbyterian Church met to discuss opening a school, resulting in the establishment of Cane Hill Collegiate Institute. Robert Waterman, professor and family historian, states "it was exclusively for boys, and was primarily concerned with preparing them for the ministry."[7] These young men began their college education in a log cabin, which was later replaced by a brick building in 1852. In this same year, the name was changed to Cane Hill College, and became the

first establishment west of the Mississippi to be able to issue degrees to students upon graduation.[8]

As President of Cane Hill College, Earle joined this group who had established the college "to train young men for the Cumberland Presbyterian Ministry".[9] With his background and education, Earle was a perfect fit for this position. In his inaugural address to the Board of Trustees and the audience gathered, Earle lays out his vision for the school, in which he states his ideas on what made a prosperous college, and what courses he felt should be taught there. Among those subjects Earle saw as necessary were mathematics, Greek, Latin, natural, mental and moral sciences, and religion. He felt that religion did not have to be a stand-alone course, but could instead be woven through the curriculum and appear in all classes.[10] In the first two years of his presidency, he had improved the college's facilities and hired on a number of new staff members who were qualified to teach the aforementioned subjects. Local historian Lacy McColloch states that in these years, "the college was in its most flourishing condition yet."[11] The college catalogue published in 1859 shows an enrollment of 88, and in 1860 an enrollment of 103. This small college was obviously flourishing under Earle's leadership. However prosperous the school was becoming, events on the horizon threatened to slow it down, and by the time the Civil War came to Arkansas, Earle found it advisable to close the school at the end of the 1861 school year and focus on the war.

Earle's early years give us a small glimpse at the man he was to become during and after the Civil War. At the outset of the war, Earle was in his third year as President of Cane Hill College, but decided to enlist in the army as a private. Enrollment records show that he was 31 years of age, stood six feet tall, had dark hair and eyes, and his profession was listed as ministry. The cause written for Earle's enlistment was simply "for the war."[12] He saw no action in the first year of the war and local writer Thomas Rothrock states that during this first year, Earle and the rest of the men raised in the early regiments were sent home. Rothrock further states that Earle "preached and farmed in the winter and spring of 1861-62... and courted Amanda,"[13] who was busy traveling and teaching in the Fort Smith/ Van Buren area. She and Earle had most of their courtship through letters, where Earle even proposed marriage through the written page, stating in one letter that they should make "a mutual pledge to be united in the bond of matrimony as soon as we may think it advisable."[14] That dream would not come true for three more years, because during the summer of 1862 Earle was asked to raise a regiment. He was given the post of captain of the

Amanda Buchanan Earle, ca. 1880
From: "The History of Cane Hill"
by Robert Basham. (1969)

regiment, and sought to gather even more friends, acquaintances, students, neighbors, and relatives alike to join the cause. The men that became part of Company B of the Arkansas 34th fought in the battles of Prairie Grove, Helena, and Jenkins Ferry. Later on in the war, Earle further emerged as a leader and eventually led men as Major of the famous Arkansas "Fighting 34th".[15]

During his travels with Company B, Earle wrote many letters home to his love Amanda in which he described the conditions of life in the camp: "We have been on march two days... the arms of our regiment were drawn last evening by four or five companies, leaving my company unarmed. I hope we have more in a short time."[16] Earle shows in this letter his desire to fight for his country, further stating that he feared being left behind in Arkansas if weapons were not provided for his men soon. This was not to be, however, for the men fought a few weeks later at Prairie Grove, where the Confederacy lost the battle because Major General Hindman feared their regiments would be outnumbered, but Earle states that he is unsure why.

> "As you all remember, our army retreated somewhat hastily from Prairie Grove. But why it retreated I never knew. You know that we won the field, for you saw the enemy fly from it. You know that when night put an end to the strife, the whole field was ours. I charge no man with dishonor, but I repeat I never knew why we ran away."[17]

Rothrock states that Earle and his men of Company B were "in the thick of the tough fighting on December 7th when a Yankee bullet creased the back of the captain's head, perforating his campaign cap and taking a patch of skin and hair with it."[18] Earle is recorded as saying, as he removed his hat and looked at it, "what happened to the back of my head?! If it had been an inch the other way it wouldn't have touched me!"[19] Rothrock records from Earle's personal records of the Battle at Prairie Grove that six men died, either on the battlefield or from wounds sustained there, while three additional men who were wounded recovered and survived. He also records that within the first year that Earle drew up his regiment, thirty-five men were called deserters.

To Earle's dismay, the war rolled on through the rest of 1862 and into 1863. In a letter written to his beloved Amanda, Earle records: "I content

Painting of First Buiiding at Cane Hiill College
by Amanda Buchanan Earle
Courtesy: Walter John Lemke Papers (MS L541),
S4, B5, F32, No. 1296, Special Collections,
University of Arkansas Libraries

myself with the consciousness of doing duty. The end of the war now is beyond my power of vision. It will come though at some time in the course of human events... that cruel demon of war frowns sternly and in his fury says NOT YET... I now do not expect peace for many months."[20] And peace did not come for a while- Earle was to fight next in Helena. He records his experiences at the battle there, describing the less-than-favorable conditions in which they marched. Aim was taken at the enemy, who retreated for a time but Earle states that there were more soldiers there than originally thought: "they leapt up from their covering and advanced with a shout... we were repulsed and retreated and kept on retreating... our defeat would have been more cheerfully borne had it not been so closely followed by the news that Vicksburg had fallen." Lines of communication must have been open for Earle to find out that information, which was clearly not taken well, for he knew that they "must stand or fall alone... no helping hand can be extended across the Mississippi to aid us."[21] Earle goes on to fight at the Battle of Jenkins Ferry, and gives a brief account of

the battle in a Speech to the survivors of the Arkansas 34th. "On the 30th of April 1864 we fought the Battle of Jenkins Ferry. Of all the battles in which we took part, this was the fiercest and the hottest".[22] He goes on to describe the conditions of the battlefield, the position of the enemy, and the valor with which men fought and died. Shortly after this battle, Rothrock states that Earle, due to lack of men in the regiment, was elected the commander of the whole of the 34th Infantry but never saw action again. It is unclear where most of the regiment was during the last months of 1864, but records show that most were in Northern Louisiana and Texas. All of this information proves yet again that Earle was diligent in his cause to fight in the war. He was not a quitter- he was a southern gentleman, whose conduct would not allow him to quit. He wanted to see his men through to the end; to a peace that all could find with one another.

Earle was stationed in Texas when word came of Lee's surrender, and he and his men made their way home. Rothrock records that "on the 9th day of June, 1865, the greater part of what was left of the old regiment, stacked arms in the garrison at Fort Smith and ceased to be Confederate Soldiers."[23] Upon the end of the war, Earle returned to Cane Hill, only to find his town and college virtually burnt to the ground by United States soldiers under the command of General Blunt. This did not deter his intentions, however, and four days later, he and Amanda finally wed. The Earle's eventually had seven children: Ellen (Earle) Richardson, Fontaine P. Earle, Woodson Earle, and Clara Earle. Three other children died as youngsters.[24]

Extensive records for Earle's preaching during the war have not been found, but it is evident in his writings to Amanda during the war and those that reflect on his time in the war that his faith was unwavering. Bibles were hard to come by, and it is not known whether Earle and his men had testaments or if the went without. There was no state bible society in Arkansas to gather and distribute testaments or tracts to the soldiers, so it is doubtful that Earle or his men had them unless they brought along their personal copies from home.[25] There is evidence in Earle's collection of letters, however, that men were trying to raise money to "supply the southern army west of the Mississippi with Bibles and Testaments", and further evidence that Earle's own brother in law, John Buchanan, was a member of the American Bible Society who traveled extensively in the state of Arkansas to gather money for bibles. [26] Earle's letters to Amanda show that, whether or not he had a bible, he was devout in prayer to God, "I join you in your prayer for peace, but until then we must endure all that comes. Let us put our trust in God and all will be well... time will become better in

the course of human events, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."[27] It is sentiments like these that show no doubt Earle was as pious on the battlefield as he was on the home front.

Present research does not show that there was a designated chaplain in the Arkansas 34th, but it is known that Earle assumed the role of chaplain on many occasions. In a tribute written for Earle at the time of his death, a colleague named Thomas Campbell who was a board member at Arkansas Cumberland College, states: "through the war he never forgot his higher calling as a Soldier of the Cross and often preached to the soldiers and in revival meetings held in camp."[28] This must have been a wonderful treat for the soldiers of his regiment, because at times it was hard to find a Chaplain, and it is estimated by Historian Gardiner Shattuck that if there was a chaplain, he didn't stay long: "the average length of time that chaplains stayed in the army was eighteen months, and very few remained with their original regiments for the entire war."[29] Most could not financially afford to give up their jobs with congregations to enter the war, nor were they willing to leave congregations behind. According to Historian Charles Wilson, those who did enter the army and remain there as clergy members and chaplains had the challenging job of "nurturing morale and encouraging unity in the face of hardships... they celebrated fast days as somber rituals... cared for soldiers, led revivals, conducted prayer groups, performed mass baptisms... distributed religious tracts, hymnals, and Bibles."[30] Other duties included "writing letters for hospitalized soldiers, acting as postmaster for his unit, maintaining a library stocked with religious and secular literature, teaching soldiers how to read and write, informing families of the deaths of loved ones, aided freed blacks who flocked to the army, carried men and equipment...dug wells... and foraged for fresh vegetables."[31] According to Brinsfield, a chaplain's job was dependent on several things, "the weather, on the expectations and support of their commanders, on the proximity of the enemy, and on whatever resources they could scrape together."[32]

Revivals seem to have left the most lasting impact on history of religion in the civil war. Revivals were held often in order to continue educating the soldiers as Christian men and to "keep them unspotted from the world." Historian Reid Mitchell suggests that revivals also served to "church the un-churched."[33] It is evident from letters written home to Amanda that Earle himself attended such revivals: "Religion is reviving at a cheering rate in this part of the land. When we reached Searcy a revival had just closed. At Austin one was in progress. About ten miles from here another is now going on. These facts give comfort, and if they could become general

better times would follow. I hope the good Lord will take this matter and settle it."[34] Again, Earle shows that even in times of disparity and war, he knew whom to call upon- the Heavenly Father. The duties that he likely performed as unofficial chaplain would carry over into his work as a minister after the war, further showing Earle's high standards and pious ways.

During and most assuredly after the war, Earle continued in his position as a minister to the Salem Congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that met at Cane Hill. He had strong feelings about the way preachers must behave: "Certain qualifications are necessary. The preacher must have a converted heart. He must have a proper estimate of the value of immortal souls. He must be in continuous communication with his God. He must study the word then preach the word because it is sharp and quick."[35] Many in the community must have felt exactly this way about Earle, for he was called on to speak in many places. Earle's great-grandson Robert Waterman, a professor and historian, has collected family records that include the following statement published by the Central Presbyterian Church: "at several different times he (Earle) served as pastor at Fayetteville, and at all times ready to lend help when needed. When in extreme difficulties the church would send for Major Earle."[36]

Early sermons preached by Earle have been collected, and some of his early messages reflect themes of redemption, salvation, and God as our protector and provider. It is evident from his writings that Earle was a devout man who preached on every subject imaginable. He knew his scripture well, both Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and had done extensive research on the Gospels, the book of Matthew in particular, as well as the holy spirit, angels, and had studied the Hebrew language. It is also evident that he believed in an afterlife, preaching often on judgment, heaven, hell, and what happened to one's soul upon departure from this life. Earle firmly believed in God and his son, and thought that salvation came through him: "It is a firm and immovable confidence in the truths of the bible, together with a full, implicit, and unreserved reliance upon the efficiency of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin."[37] Earle also felt that God was watching over him and taking care of him throughout all his life. In an undated sermon on the providence of God, Earle states "there is a general providence- God has not left us without evidence of his care."[38] His message throughout the war is unwavering, and he continues his theme of the providence of God and salvation, as well as eternal life. A sermon titled "In my Father's House are many Mansions" allows readers to see Earle's belief in the afterlife: "our father's house has two chambers- the one here

Earle House at Cane Hill, ca. 1945. Photograph by Walter Lemke
Courtesy: Margaret Smith Ross Papers (1587),
Box 42, File 41, #970,
Special Collections, University of
Arkansas Libraries

on earth, the other in heaven, divided by the veil of death. The ante-chamber is now occupied by those who have been made kings and priests unto God. Rev. 1.6."[39] In another of Earle's sermons, he states "Eternal Life! The expression itself is without limit. No mathematical computation could show the beginning or ending of an eternal life. It is a blissful immortality beyond the grave, it is a life of perfect peace and infinite joy; it is a never ending existence into the immediate presence of the Holy Trinity."[40]

Also evident from Earle's writings is the importance he found in Sunday School. In an undated document, Earle records the tenets of "Sabbath School" that he finds essential to all members. He begins with the "superintendents and teachers", asking them to "have a normal class, and be in your place". He further asks the scholars to "Stand for Jesus. Support his cause. Defend his truth because he has stood up for you- this gives you a principle of action for life."[41] In another letter, written to the New York Observer on September 21, 1876, Earle expresses his gratitude to a "Brother A", asking "where would we be if Brother A had not come to us? He

speaks of how there used to be no Sunday school or church, and that now there are both. He also says that Sundays "used to be spent hunting and fishing, and now we go to church and Sunday school."[42] Earle is again seen to be a devout man, even to the point that he pushed the importance of "Sabbath School" to all he encountered.

As pastor of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Earle's influence within the community is evident. His impact on the educational foundation within the area following the war was just as prominent. The first of Earle's Presidential duties after the war was to rebuild the campus that had been ravaged by US soldiers. Waterman states: "the college buildings along with a valuable library were burned to the ground in November, 1864. Only a boarding house for young preachers that was used as a hospital during the war was spared."[43] Historian Braly states that if it had not been for men like Earle, whose "generosity and self sacrifice made the re-establishment of the college a possibility" the school would have never been rebuilt.[44] Earle worked to re-open the school, and during this time McColloch states that he kept himself very busy: "In addition to his administrative duties President Earle taught a full schedule of courses and preached at least two Sundays a month to the local Salem Presbyterian Congregation... Other Sundays he preached elsewhere and throughout the years was active in the Arkansas Synod."[45] Earle's influence even reached outside Cane Hill when in 1866, he was elected as a senator for the state of Arkansas, and went to work in Little Rock. He was able to help in passing a bill that allowed for free public schooling in the state, and was elected in 1867 to the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction. While holding this office, Earle also wrote a grammar book that was published by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. [46]

In 1868, Earle returned to his duties as President of Cane Hill, and a new building was opened on the university grounds- the college continued to flourish under his leadership. He also built a beautiful family home in the same year. Earle was quickly becoming well known all over Northwest Arkansas for being a well-respected man as president, as a leader in his regiment during the war, and as a preacher and teacher of the Lords' word. But he did not stop there- his local popularity began to manifest in the form of speaking engagements, and in the summer of 1873 Earle was asked to speak at the dedication of the Fayetteville Confederate Cemetery. In his speech, he states: "The men whose remains are gathered here were Southern soldiers. As such they went to the war, as such they endured the heat and cold, as such they fought and fell in many a battlefield, and as such we honor them."[47] Another speaking engagement came his way just ten years

after the war had ended, when Earle was asked to speak at the reunion of the Survivors of the 34th Arkansas Infantry. In an eloquent speech about the men who fought and died for the cause, Earle states:

> "The intense excitement which such a scene produces in the mind cannot pass away and leave no trace behind. But to be an actor in such a conflict, to stand face to face with the foe, to meet steel with steel and shot with shot, and feel the battle's hot breath on the brow- these so deeply impress the soul that nothing less than death, possibly nothing short of eternity, can lot out their remembrance. The associations that cluster around the name and locality of Prairie Grove render this almost hallowed ground. Just over there in the old field our regiment was organized. There was our first dress parade. Nearly a thousand men stood in line- men just from their homes and fresh from the embraces of their loved ones."[48]

Earle continued his speaking engagements, and in 1883 attended another reunion in Missouri. That same year he received a Doctor of Divinity degree from his alma mater, Cumberland University.[49]

Earle resigned his presidency in 1885, and during his break as president of Cane Hill, tragedy struck again. The building that he had commissioned in 1868 was burned to the ground by a supposed arsonist, and yet another one had to be built in its place. Earle returned as president of the college in 1886 and a new building was completed later that year. He held this role as president until the college, not having enough students, interest, or funds to keep it open, closed in 1892.[50] Cane Hill College also felt competition from Arkansas Industrial University (later renamed University of Arkansas) that was established in 1872. However the college came to close its doors, Miller states: "the influence this college had on this area cannot be estimated. It has been said to have been what fostered the public school system in the state. Certainly a flow of young men into the ministry came from it. The effects are felt unto this day."[51] Earle was part of what Miller discusses- he was President of Cane Hill for most of its existence, and facilitated its growth into one of the only colleges west of the Mississippi River to confer diplomas. It was in the field of Education that Earle offers his strongest influence.

When the college at Cane Hill closed, money raised by the Presbyterian Synod allowed a new school to be opened farther away from the new university at Fayetteville. The new school opened at Clarksville, and was called Arkansas Cumberland College. Earle was elected to the Board of Trustees, but when money got tight, was asked to become president of the college. He did so for one year, helping them to get their finances in working order. Earle was honored yet again in 1894 by being asked to preside over the 64th General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church,[52] and did so gladly. It was this same year that his beloved Amanda died from pneumonia.

After the death of his wife, Earle slowed very little. He continued to speak at various engagements, and in 1897 was asked to speak at yet another Civil War Soldier's reunion at Parks Grove where he gave his opinions on why men fight: "there are three things men will fight for: their country, property and religion." He goes on in this speech to outline what he believes to be the overall causes of the Civil War, mentioning the Missouri Compromise, African slavery, states rights, Kansas troubles and John Brown's Raid.[53] Earle is asked to speak once again, this time for an Iowa regiment, and even at the ripe old age of 72, a northern historian named Finney states "the poise of his mind and the breadth of his sympathies were revealed when the Grand Army of the Republic invited him to give the principal address at the reunion held in Washington, Iowa."[54] Here Earle was asked to speak to two regiments against whom he and his men had fought at Prairie Grove, he took with him the very cap that he was wearing on the day when a bullet grazed his head at Prairie Grove. Upon showing the men of these Iowa regiments his cap, he told them "Some of you Yanks shot that hole in my cap,"[55] but he held no ill will towards these men. From these many examples one can see that a note written to the editor of the local paper concerning Earle is very true. The editorial states "Mr. Earle is a gentlemen, advanced in years and recognized all over northwest Arkansas as a true gentleman of scholarly attainment."[56]

After living a full life of many careers, Earle became ill in 1907. Ellis states that he "had to sit when preaching when he became to infirm to stand for any length of time, and the last session meeting was held at his home, at which time he resigned due to health reasons that proved to be terminal."[57] Earle passed from this life on September 8, 1908, and is buried in Cane Hill Cemetery. Upon his death, the Board of Trustees at Arkansas Cumberland College issued the following statement: "Dr. Earle was a stalwart, courageous, yet unassuming and gentle character. As a soldier,

he was brave and fearless. As a teacher eminently qualified, painstaking and sympathetic. As a minister of the gospel, powerful and persuasive. In fact the college was saved from suspension at one time only by his leaving his home and assuming charge of the faculty at great personal sacrifice... we have lost another of our ablest and most efficient members."[58] The home in which he and Amanda lived and raised their children still stands, though it is in disrepair and is not accessible, even by foot. No doubt Earle was an influential man during the entirety of his life. McCulloch states: "He stood tall among men, not only physically but intellectually, and was a vigorous, active and outstanding administrator, teacher, preacher, and leader of men."[59] Campbell further states: "his life was active to the very end and his influence in the community in which he lived and in the Church for which he labored will be felt for many years... he was a true Confederate and in his death this camp has suffered an irreparable loss."[60]

By taking this look at Fontaine Richard Earle, one can clearly see that this man was truly one of the most influential in the fields of Education and Religion. As an educator, Earle shines as the leading man of Cane Hill College. He was their president for many years, and as such, brought enrollment to an all-time high for the university. Earle also helped Cane Hill College to become one of the few universities to offer degrees west of the Mississippi River. When the school closed its doors in the 1890s, Earle did not stop. He was then asked to become President of Cumberland College, today called College of the Ozarks. He left such a lasting impact there that when proposing new names, the college was almost named Earle College in honor of him. Earle's influence also shows that education was more important in the minds of Arkansans than is typically thought. While most think the state to be backwards and in need of a makeover in education, Earle proves that this statement did not ring true during his lifetime, for he was busy building a university in the small town of Cane Hill, Arkansas, that existed for forty years.

In the field of Religion, Earle's life shows us that religion was very important to society. In fact, society was mostly focused around religion during his lifetime. Communities gathered with their church not only on Sundays, but also on special occasions. The ministers of the church were seen as upstanding men in the community, men who could be looked to for advice, piety, friendship, and ultimately as examples of how a Christian should live and behave. Earle was the ultimate example of all these things to the residents of Cane Hill and all of Northwest Arkansas. His influence resonated all over the state, and his legacy lives on today.

Going to Cane hill today is slightly different from visiting there in the late 1800s. There are paved roads, houses with indoor plumbing and electricity, people who have jobs outside the small community, and the home that Earle built for his family cannot be found. However different the community looks, Earle's legacy still lives on. The last building he commissioned to be built at Cane Hill College still stands, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church still opens its doors each Sunday, and members of the community still know his name. Fontaine Richard Earle left a lasting legacy on this community, and hopefully, it will never be forgotten.

ENDNOTES

[1] David B. Ellis, *The Presbyterians of Cane Hill, Arkansas* (ARC Press: Cane Hill, AR 1991), 34-35.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Robert E. Waterman, "Waterman Family History" (hereafter cited as Waterman, "Family History").

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From New York City to Cane Hill, Arkansas By Way of an Orphan Train

Martha Gould England*

Walter William Potthast, born July 19, 1905, Harold Potthast, born September 27, 1906, and Edna Potthast, born August 22, 1908, were the children of William Potthast and Lena Kropp Potthast, both of whom were German immigrants who resided in New York City.

William was a chandelier maker and Lena was a homemaker. William committed suicide June 5, 1911, and Lena suffered an emotional breakdown and was admitted to Kings Park Hospital in New York on October 10, 1911. The children were committed as public charges to the City of New York Brooklyn Industrial School for Destitute Children by the Department of Public Charities on October 9, 1911.

On June 12, 1913, the children's maternal grandmother Frieda Kropp due to poor health, signed legal surrender of the children to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) where they were received by CAS on that date. The same day, the children boarded an orphan train headed westward. They rode the train to Arkansas where they were placed into the care of William Earl Gould and his wife Mary Lucy Moore Gould, of Cane Hill, Washington County, Arkansas.

On October 23, 1917, the children were released from the Children's Aid Society legally and adopted by the Gould family. Their names were changed to Walter Earl Gould, William Harry Gould, and Edna Elizabeth Gould. The adoption was probated in Washington County, Arkansas on November 17, 1917.

One of the things I remember my father, Walter Earl (Pat) Gould telling me was that when they were chosen by the Gould family who wished to have a boy and a girl, that William and Edna were picked. Both William and Edna began to cry as did their brother, Harry. When asked why the tears,

---

*The author is the daughter of Walter Earl Gould, one of the three children sent to Arkansas on an orphan train. She lives in Georgia.

The children in the clothes they wore on the orphan train. This was the first photograph in Arkansas with the Gould Family. Standing (L to R): Harold Potthast (William Harry Gould), William Potthast (Walter Earl Gould); Seated, Edna Potthast (Edna Elizabeth Gould)

Courtesy of the author

the children sobbed that Harry was their brother and they wanted to stay together. The Goulds then selected Harry, and he was ablee to remain with his brother and sister.

Another story I remember was that the children had never been exposed to rural life and living in Cane Hill took on a different twist for the three former city children. They were exploring the country side and came upon a skunk. They caught it and proudly took it home to show to their new family. The skunk was released. The children's clothes were buried, and the children's bodies were thoroughly scrubbed.

I found a letter written to Lucy Moore Gould by one of the agents of CAS. Lucy M. Gould had inquired about the children's early history and the agent replied to the questions which were primarily about the death of their father, their mother's illness, and their grandmother's inability to raise them.

In the year 2005, my husband and I were able to contact the Children's Aid Society and speak with Mr. Victor Remer, Archivist of CAS. He verified their records and sent us copies of their records including the letter Lucy Gould had written to their Agent on July 21, 1914. I quote from her letter:

> "We still have Walter, Harry, and Edna Potthost and love them better everyday. They seem perfectly contented and happy. They are growing fast and rarely ever have a pain or ache. We hope that we may be able to keep them; and when they are grown and enter society we want them to be on equal footing with the children of our friends and no dark cloud as to their ancestry."

Mr. Remer in his letter to me wrote that the placement of the children with the Goulds of Cane Hill, Arkansas, was "a marriage made in heaven." Mr. Remer also stated: "The workers from CAS observed that they were "beautiful children", "unusually good", and "very bright." The Goulds loved them from the start and as you indicated, they were adopted in 1917."

Thanks to the Internet and searches from the U.S. Federal Census we have been able to locate more information about William Potthast and Lena Kropp Potthast. William Potthast arrived in New York May 4, 1877 at age 23. His departure was Bremen, Germany. His wife, Catherine and son, Julius, traveled with him. The 1880 U.S. Federal Census lists William, Catherine and sons, Julius and William in Kings County, Brooklyn, NY. We found them again in 1900 with three more sons.

Catherine Potthast died November 2, 1902. William married Lena Kropp in January, 1904. I have listed their children at the beginning of this article.

As we have researched and learned more about the early history of my father, his brother, and his sister, we have concluded that the children had good genes from their Potthast/Kropp parents, were most fortunate to have been raised and adopted by William Earl and Lucy Moore Gould. The Goulds took into their home three young children and gave them love, nurturing, a safe environment, and shared them with their extended family and Cane Hill community who accepted and loved these children into their adulthood.

All three of the Potthast/Kropp Gould/Moore children are deceased, but they have left their children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren a wonderful legacy. We were taught respect, integrity, honesty, and the importance of love and acceptance. We were taught to value education and spirituality in our lives.

It is with deep gratitude that I share this story about three grandparents I never knew and one, my grandfather Gould affectionately known as Pop, who influenced who I am today.

This has been submitted by Martha Gould England, daughter of Walter Earl (Pat) Gould. I live in Atlanta, Ga. with my husband John, who has worked with me in researching my ancestors. Also our children, Andy and Becky England as well as my sister, Linda Gould Ralston have provided much help. Our son took us to New York and we located where the children had lived, the crematory where we saw the urn of William Potthast, and we visited Middletown State Hospital where Lena Kropp lived after being transferred from Kings Park Hospital. Our daughter has a knowledge of the German language and has been helpful in translating documents for us. I sent our daughter and granddaughter of Walter (Pat) Gould, Becky England, a copy of this article and she replied with the following that I would like to use as a conclusion to this story:

"We do not know for certain, why William Potthast and Lena Kropp came to America...to seek a better life, we can assume. They did not live the American dream. They did not make it. By all standards, they did not succeed. But through them, their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and now great-great-grandchildren have lived and are living their American dream.

And through us, they, too, have succeeded. It puts me in touch with how much I owe those who have come before me, and how much my life will impact those who are to come."

The 1914 Gould Family Christmas Card featured the three children. L to R: William Harry Gould, Edna Elizabeth Gould, and Walter Earl Gould
Courtesy of the author

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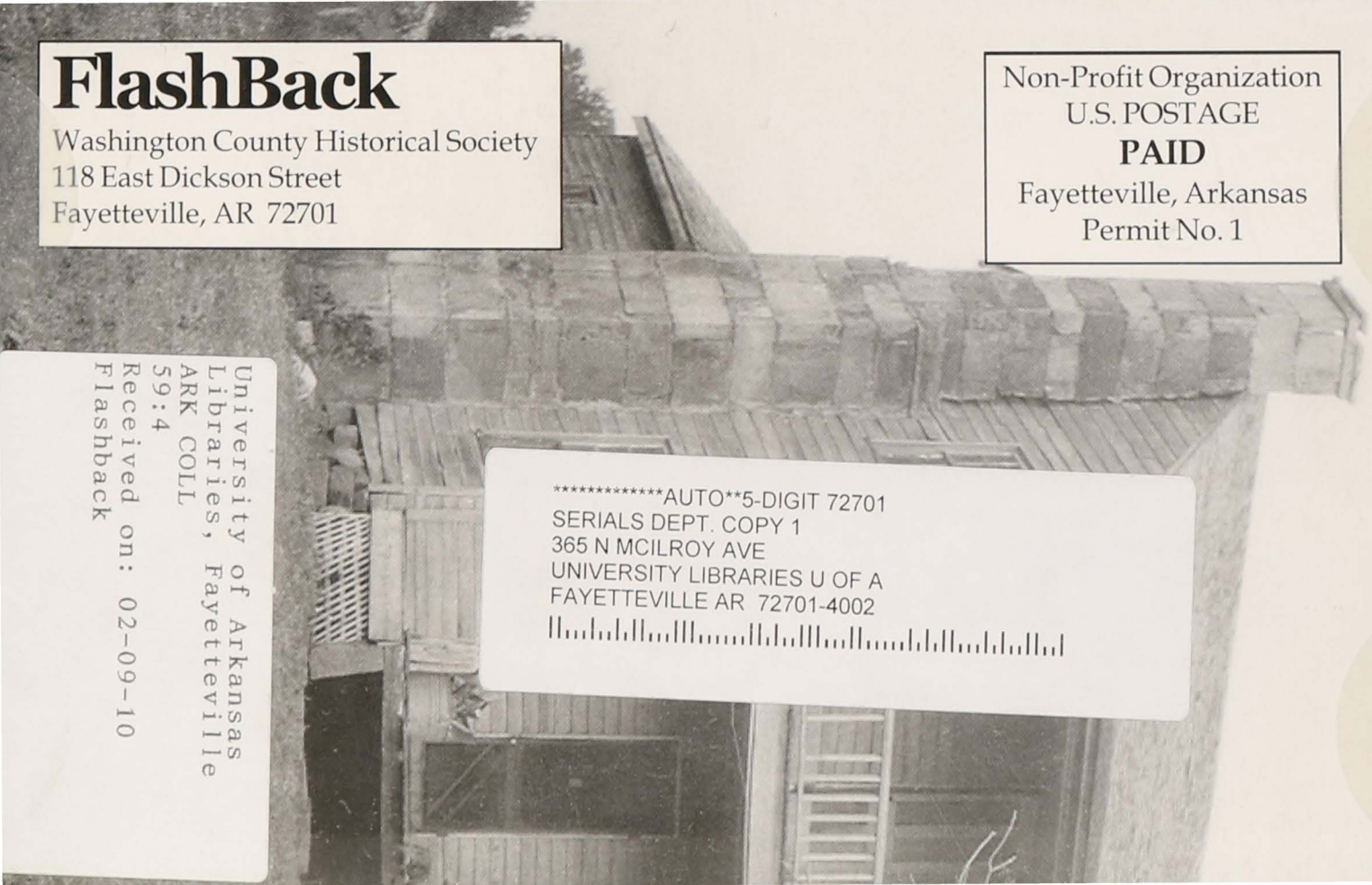

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